



Newsletter of the

Kobuk - Seward Peninsula

Resource Management Plan

Bureau of Land Management, Northern Field Office

November 2004



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Letter From the Field Office Manager

This is the first of several newsletters that will provide you with information regarding the Kobuk-Seward Peninsula Resource Management Plan (RMP). We hope these newsletters and our web site will help keep you up-to-date on important aspects of the planning process.

The RMP process started with the publication of a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register in January 2004. The NOI stated that BLM will develop a new Resource Management Plan for the Kobuk-Seward Peninsula planning area.

This new plan will replace the existing Northwest Management Framework Plan (1982), which currently guides management of these lands. The NOI also started public scoping, a process used to identify issues and concerns relative to the planning process.



Scoping meeting in Kivalina.

Last spring BLM held nine public scoping meetings to obtain tribal, public, and agency input. We reviewed and categorized all of the scoping comments from meetings and letters to better understand your issues and concerns. These issues and concerns will be addressed in the draft RMP and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) which will include a range of management alternatives.

Since completion of scoping, the Kobuk-Seward Peninsula Planning Team has begun to prepare the RMP and EIS. Over the summer of 2004, BLM resource specialists compiled existing data for their programs and in some cases, gathered additional data. This fall, we will assess the existing management situation and discuss opportunities to address issues and concerns raised during scoping. During the winter of 2005, the Planning Team will develop alternatives for the draft RMP.

This newsletter includes a short summary of what we have accomplished and what still needs to be done in development of the Kobuk-Seward Peninsula RMP. We hope that your interest in this planning effort continues and that you respond with comments and ideas at key points in the process.

Robert W. Schneider
Field Manager
Northern Field Office



Bob Schneider
NFO Field Manager

What is a Resource Management Plan?

A resource management plan (RMP) provides comprehensive, long-term direction concerning the use and management of resources managed by BLM. The RMP will establish goals and objectives for management of resources and the measures needed to achieve those goals and objectives. It will identify lands that are available for certain uses, including any restrictions on those uses, as well as lands that are closed to certain uses. When the BLM develops an RMP, an environmental impact statement (EIS) is also required. The EIS will analyze the environmental effects of the proposed management actions.

The Purpose of Scoping

Public involvement is an important part of developing a new resource management plan. Scoping is a process where the BLM asks for input from the public and interested agencies on the nature and extent of issues and impacts to be addressed in the RMP. The formal scoping period began with the publication of the Notice of Intent in the Federal Register on January 30, 2004 and ended April 30, 2004. During the formal scoping period, public meetings



*Crater Lake in the Kigluaik Mountains.
BLM photo by Joe Webb*



The Kobuk-Seward Peninsula RMP will guide management of about 13 million acres of public lands in western Alaska. Public lands within the dark shaded area will be covered by the RMP.

were held at several locations throughout the planning area and a scoping letter was sent to tribal governments, tribal organizations, and State and Federal agencies. The Kobuk-Seward Peninsula planning website went on-line February 18, 2004.

How We Are Using Your Comments

Upon completion of the scoping period, we analyzed your comments to identify

relevant issues to address in the Kobuk-Seward Peninsula RMP. After analysis of the comments, we published a scoping report which is available on our website or by request from our office. The scoping report will help us ensure that the RMP and EIS address those issues important to the people who live in the region or who may be affected by BLM's decisions. The scoping report does not make decisions or set forth policies. It does summarize the comments received by BLM through

June 30, 2004, and identifies issues to be addressed by the plan. Comments received after completion of the scoping report will be considered in the next steps of the planning process.

Issues Identified During Scoping

During the scoping period, we received 12 letters and hundreds of comments at scoping meetings. From your comments, we identified five *planning issues*. What we called issues are matters of controversy or dispute over resource management activities or land use. To qualify as an issue, the matter had to be well-defined and it had to present several possible management alternatives. Issues merit further analysis because, if unresolved, they could cause problems in the future.

Five Issues Identified During Scoping

- recreation management
- subsistence
- habitat of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd
- access and transportation corridors
- mineral withdrawal

Other Management Concerns

You also helped us identify many *management concerns* during scoping. Generally, a management concern matters to fewer individuals than a planning issue. Many of these concerns will be addressed in the plan but do not have a high enough level of controversy to be considered an issue.

In addition to management concerns raised by the public, BLM has identified several areas where management direction may need to be changed to meet current laws, regulations, policies, or to address changed conditions.

- Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Management: BLM lands within the planning area need to be designated as either

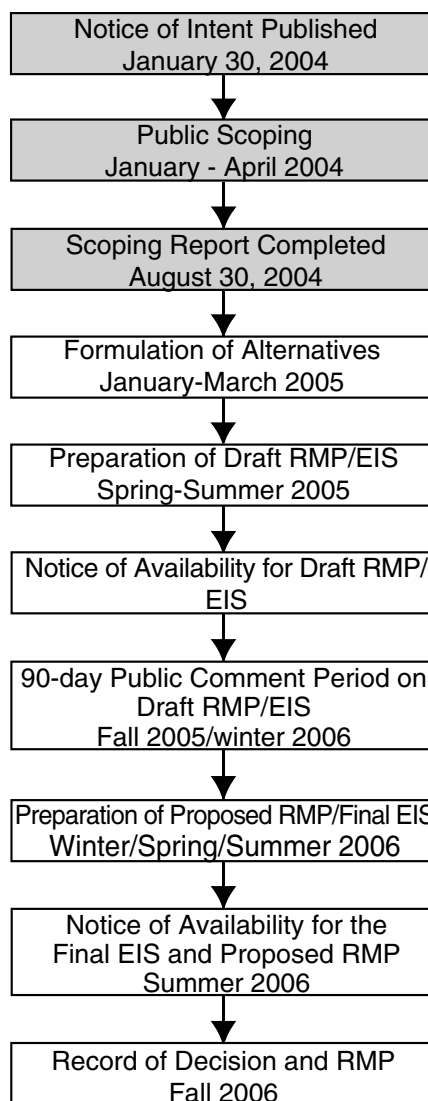
“open,” “limited,” or “closed” to the use of OHVs.

- Visual Resource Management: Visual resource management involves systematically classifying landscapes and assessing their vulnerability to the impacts of human activity. BLM lands within the planning area need to be classified.
- Fire Management: The RMP needs to be updated to incorporate national fire management policies enacted in recent years.

- Land status: The RMP needs to reflect the substantial changes in land ownership that have occurred within the planning area over the last 20 years.
- Interim management of State-selected lands: The State of Alaska has expressed concerns about interim management of lands selected by the State, and it has emphasized the need for the coordinated management of these lands until land conveyance is complete.

Planning Timeline—Where Are We in the Process?

This timeline shows the entire planning process. The shaded boxes indicate steps that have already been completed.



What's Next?

This winter, the Planning Team will be working to identify goals, objectives, desired resource conditions, and management strategies for BLM lands. These various objectives and management strategies will be presented as a range of alternatives in the draft plan.

How You Can Participate

Although the formal scoping period is closed, we invite you to continue to participate in the planning process. The progress of the RMP can be followed on-line at the RMP web site:

<http://aurora.ak.blm.gov/Northwest/nwplanning/>

The web site will be updated with information and new documents as they are completed.

When we complete the Draft RMP/EIS, tentatively scheduled for fall 2005, we will contact the public to announce the document's availability for review and comment. At that time we will also inform you of upcoming public meetings where you can learn more about the draft RMP/EIS and provide oral and written comments.

Individuals and groups receiving this newsletter will continue to be on the mailing list. Anyone wishing to be added or deleted from the list may do so by contacting Jeanie Cole at the Bureau of Land Management, Northern Field Office, 1150 University Ave., Fairbanks, AK 99709, by phone at (907) 474-2340 or 1-800-437-7021, or by e-mail at Jeanie_Cole@ak.blm.gov.



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Visit Our Web Site

<http://aurora.ak.blm.gov/Northwest/nwplanning/>

Commonly Used Acronyms

BLM Bureau of Land Management
EIS Environmental Impact Statement
NFO Northern Field Office
NOI Notice of Intent
OHV Off-Highway Vehicle
RMP Resource Management Plan

BLM/AK/PL-05/003+1610+020